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FROM THE COEUR D'ALENE PRESS

NIC board considers budget cuts

By MAUREEN DOLAN

Staff writer

COEUR d'ALENE -- North Idaho College, like other agencies that rely on state funding, had to rewrite its budgets for fiscal year 2009 in response to Gov. Butch Otter's warning last week of a projected \$174.3 million shortfall in state revenue.

At Wednesday's board meeting, college President Priscilla Bell told trustees NIC received notification of the pending revenue cut early last week.

She said that three separate plans for reducing the college's 2009 budget by 1 percent, 2 percent and 2.5 percent had to be submitted by the college to the state Board of Education by Monday.

"We've also been informed that we may have to submit additional plans for more holdbacks as high as 5 percent," Bell said.

If a 2.5 percent holdback is ordered by the governor, Bell said roughly \$285,000 will be cut from the general education budget and nearly \$112,000 from professional-technical education.

She told trustees the plans were submitted after she and college administration met Friday and identified budget areas for reduction.

She said some of the items up for removal from this year's budget include equipment for one classroom scheduled to be equipped along with several others as well as reductions in each area's budget for part-time and temporary staffing.

"We do not anticipate with these reductions any reductions in personnel at this point," Bell said.

She said although no holdback has been ordered yet, she expects to hear something definite in October when the state releases its quarterly finance projections.

Bell said the cutbacks could become a permanent part of the budget and extend into 2010 and beyond.

"That will become more challenging, but we're confident we'll be able to handle it this year," Bell said.

In other news, trustees voted unanimously in favor of entering into a memorandum of agreement with the Lakeland, Post Falls and Coeur d'Alene school districts, the North Idaho Manufacturers Consortium and the city of Rathdrum to purchase 100 acres on the Rathdrum Prairie from the Meyer brothers to expand professional-technical education.

The college will purchase 40 acres for \$1.1 million and Lakeland School District will purchase another 40 acres for the same price.

The Meyer brothers are expected to donate 10 acres and the North Idaho Manufacturers Consortium, a business group comprising some of the area's top manufacturing companies, will lead an effort to purchase the remaining 10 acres using contributions from private business and industry from inside and outside the consortium.

That 20 acres will become the property of the districts for the purpose of developing a professional-technical high school.

"This does not mean the high schools are not going to need to have some basic PTE course areas themselves. This will be a continuation," said board chair Rolly Williams. "We're hoping that students in their junior and senior years attend this particular facility on the Rathdrum Prairie as well as finish their requirements for high school. So, this is a matter of bringing everybody together to utilize the same facilities."

He said the college has been "working on this for quite a while."

"I'm glad to see we're finally getting to the point where we have a memo of understanding with the other people involved," Williams said.

FROM THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Four Senate hopefuls will debate in Idaho

Front-runner Risch won't be attending
Betsy Z. Russell
Staff writer
September 25, 2008

BOISE – Students at the College of Idaho in Caldwell were proud that they'd organized a debate in the race for U.S. Sen. Larry Craig's seat that was attracting lots of candidates – but the Republican won't participate.

The college's Young Democrats and College Republicans were going to co-sponsor the debate, but now that Republican Jim Risch won't appear, the GOP students decided against co-sponsoring the event, which will go forward with four of the five candidates participating.

"Without our candidate, we can't really do that," said Shoni Pegram, a sophomore political economy major and head of the newly formed College Republicans at College of Idaho. "I know I'll attend, if I can make it. ... I'm always interested to watch everyone. I watched Ron Paul when he came to campus."

Tonight on the campus, Democrat Larry LaRocco, Libertarian Kent Marmon and independents Rex Rammell and "Pro-Life," formerly known as Marvin Richardson, will face off in the debate.

Pegram said she's sure Risch would have attended if he'd had more notice; the organizers contacted the candidates just over a week ahead of the event.

Jesus Tarifa, vice president and organizer for the campus Young Democrats, said, "I personally called them and they were very receptive and more than happy to come and help us out with this. ... We're doing this as nonpartisan approach as possible, just emphasizing that we're trying to get the candidates out here."

The debate, at 7 p.m. in the college's Jewett Auditorium, will be moderated by political economy professor Jasper LiCalzi.

Pro-Life, who legally changed his name to the slogan for his run for the Senate, said it will be the first debate of the campaign season in which he'll participate. LaRocco and Rammell have had two head-to-head matchups so far, both in North Idaho, at which they left an empty seat for the absent Risch.

"I think the students are really doing the right thing," Pro-Life said. He said he planned to encourage Risch to attend the College of Idaho debate; not doing so, he said, "just makes him look bad, and he's not going to lose the election anyway, so he might as well."

Risch's campaign director, Matt Ellsworth, a College of Idaho graduate, said, "First and foremost, Jim's not in town." Risch has been traveling the state and going to Washington, D.C., Ellsworth said. "He was up and down North Idaho at the end of last week, he's been to Washington, been back," he said.

Ellsworth said the timing of the campus debate was "difficult."

Risch, the state's current lieutenant governor, also has declined to appear on the traditional statewide debate sponsored by the League of Women Voters and Idaho Press Club and broadcast live statewide on Idaho Public TV, scheduled for Oct. 23.

He'll appear with his opponents three times: in a debate Oct. 9 in Lewiston sponsored by the Lewiston Morning Tribune, a debate Oct. 21 sponsored by Boise TV station KTVB, and an 11:30 a.m. forum on Oct. 28 sponsored by the Meridian Chamber of Commerce.

Ellsworth declined to say why Risch is picking some debates over others. In an earlier interview with The Spokesman-Review's Huckleberries Online, Risch said, "You can't do all the debates – you get lots of invitations."

FROM THE MOSCOW PULLMAN DAILY NEWS (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Officer could roam school halls

Department, district may employ school resource officer

By Halley Griffin, Daily News staff writer

Posted on: Wednesday, September 24, 2008

The Moscow Police Department may soon have a full-time presence in Moscow schools.

Officer Rick Whitmore would become a school resource officer for the district if the Moscow School Board approves a police department proposal that was presented during the board's meeting Tuesday.

The police department received a grant from the Latah County Youth Advisory Commission to send Whitmore to school resource officer training in Kalispell, Mont., and pay his first-year membership fees to the National Association of School Resource Officers.

Whitmore said the goals of the program are to teach the principles of good citizenship, head off crime before it starts and increase positive attitudes toward law enforcement.

"More than ever am I a believer in that," Whitmore said.

As an example, Whitmore said an eighth-grader ran up and told him all about her track meet when he arrived at Moscow Junior High School to make his presentation to the board.

"It was really nice to see that," he said. "That never would have happened if I hadn't been out walking around schools."

Whitmore has been functioning as a school resource officer during the first month of school, helping dismiss students for lunch at the junior high school, patrolling crosswalks and providing a police presence on Third Street when high school students are dismissed. He also attends school functions and sporting events.

He said he'll continue to perform those duties and teach some classes as well if the board approves the plan.

As a NASRO member, Whitmore has access to curriculum used by the organization. He described a plan for what he'd teach to each grade level. For instance, he said he would teach playground safety to kindergartners, how to call 911 to first-graders and how to be a good witness to fourth-graders.

He said the youngest children are just excited to see a police officer at their school.

"I have a line out the door of kids wanting me to handcuff them," he said. "I like my job, so I'm not going to do that."

Moscow Assistant Police Chief David Duke said Whitmore's position would be created by combining a part-time school liaison officer position and the Drug Abuse Resistance Education position.

Whitmore was the department's crime prevention officer, which Lt. Dave Lehmitz said goes "hand in hand" with the school resource officer position.

Whitmore also has experience with the DARE program and teaching in schools.

"And yes, the name is related to Lena," Whitmore said, referring to Lena Whitmore Elementary School in Moscow. "She was my great-great aunt."

The board is expected to review and vote on the proposal in an upcoming meeting.

In other business:

The board will host a public forum at 7:30 p.m. Oct. 13 in the Moscow High School auditorium to gather input on graduation requirements that will go into effect for the class of 2013.

Moscow High School Principal Bob Celebrezze will present his recommendations for the curriculum and schedule changes.

QUICKREAD

WHAT HAPPENED: Moscow Police Officer Rick Whitmore presented his plan to become the city's "school resource officer." to the Moscow School Board.

WHAT IT MEANS: If approved, Whitmore will teach classes to students, have a presence in Moscow schools and work to improve the image of law enforcement among students.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT: The school board will discuss and vote to approve or deny the program in an upcoming board meeting.

WHY YOU SHOULD CARE: The Moscow Police Department is offering this service with a goal of preventing crime, increasing positive attitudes toward law enforcement and teaching principles of good citizenship.

Potlatch resolves its teacher salary dispute

Staff report

Posted on: Wednesday, September 24, 2008

A 10-month-old teacher salary dispute in Potlatch has been settled.

The negotiated salary agreement has been ratified, adopted by the Potlatch School Board and signed by district and teacher representatives.

The conflict stemmed from the teacher's union's request for a 5-percent base pay increase. The school district alleged it could only afford a 2.5-percent base pay increase.

The school board and the Potlatch Education Association agreed to recalculate teacher raises after an 11-hour mediation session in July and an eight-hour fact-finding session earlier this month.

Under the previous offer, teachers at the lower end of the salary scale could have received 12 percent pay raises, while teachers with seniority and advanced degrees might only have received the minimum percent increase.

With the new agreement, the base pay increase is still 2.5 percent, but the raises are more equitable from teacher to teacher.

PEA President Jeanette Rogers said the teachers are happy with the recalculated salary schedule.

"I'm glad that we were able to reach a compromise so that it could be over and we could take care of the jobs that we're supposed to be doing," she said.

Board chairman Doug Scoville agreed.

"Everybody benefited from the final signing," he said. "We're glad that everything is concluded and we can move on."

OUR VIEW: Students should jump at chamber program (Editorial)

By Murf Raquet, for the editorial board

Posted on: Wednesday, September 24, 2008

It's probably the best value around.

The Moscow Chamber of Commerce is offering the 'Step Up!' program - a series of eight classes designed to ready participants for life after high school. Classes include preparation for job interviews, how to fill out job applications, time and money management and how to find and keep a job.

Sounds pretty basic, and it is, but the skills taught in the program are needed.

One chamber member said he was appalled by the way some people conduct themselves during interviews.

"People showing up for interviews in short pants and flip-flops and a T-shirt, eating their lunch, or showing up late," said Mark Loaiza of Team Idaho Real Estate.

The chamber has a stake in the program. Its members will hire many of the students who complete the course.

The program starts Oct. 1 and, as of Monday, only six students had signed up to take the course. To be cost-effective, the program requires 10 participants.

Moscow High School Principal Bob Celebrezze said that MHS students were "notoriously late for sign-ups."

If that's the case then there's the first lesson.

Common sense and courtesy may have gone underground for some, but they have never gone out of style.

Learning what is expected of you in the world provides a leg-up on others who believe such knowledge is unnecessary.

Knowing how to compete effectively in the job market is a huge plus and can make the difference between a lifetime of hated jobs or an enjoyable career or two.

The best part is the program only costs \$20.

That amount may seem high, but in the long run it's the best bang for the buck.

FROM THE LEWISTON TRIBUNE (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Kids hear evils of high-tech taunts

Cyber-bullying expert brings message to middle school students

By Kerri Sandaine

Thursday, September 25, 2008

Lincoln Middle School eighth-graders listen to Shanterra McBride talk Wednesday about cyber bullying.

Shanterra McBride

Sticks and stones may break your bones, but high-tech taunts can be brutal, said a cyber-bullying expert.

Young people are distributing damaging rumors and humiliating photos with the click of a button in a cruel form of bullying that needs to stop, Shanterra McBride told students at Lincoln Middle School in Clarkston.

"Cyber bullying is affecting each and every person in this room, and that's why we have to do something about it," McBride said. "It's gotten out of hand. You can end it. You can be different."

The Internet and cell-phone texting are the most popular methods middle-school students use to bully each other, said McBride, who is visiting schools all over the country as part of "Stand Up," a cyber-bullying prevention program funded by Unicef.

Take a stand against cyber bullying by reporting what's going on and refusing to participate, said the 34-year-old Washington, D.C., resident. Delete rude texts, log off when instant messaging turns ugly, and quit forwarding hurtful e-mails. Print online conversations that contain threats or name-calling and show them to an adult, McBride advised.

The issue needs to be dealt with because the old adage that says, "names will never hurt you," is wrong, she said. The painful memories of being teased, threatened or harassed can linger for years.

"I was teased horribly from fourth to eighth grade by three girls who always found something wrong with me. I hated going to school. I still remember it."

Almost every kid in the gym raised a hand when asked if they've ever been the subject of rumors, gossip or threats. They described it as horrible, embarrassing, aggravating and depressing.

When asked if they've ever done the same things to other kids, the majority raised their hands again, including McBride.

"Even though I was teased, in high school I became the girl who could make you feel like dust with my words. The legacy I left in my hometown wasn't cool."

At first it may feel good and get some laughs, but there is delayed guilt, she said. And the people who participate in negative, mean-spirited conversations and power plays are not authentic friends.

"Those who gossip with you will gossip about you," McBride said, quoting her grandmother.

After McBride's presentation, Christina Rodriguez, 13, said she wants cyber bullying to stop. "I will tell my mom and make sure she knows about it," she said.

"I don't bully and I don't like people who bully," said Desiree Massey, 13. "I delete messages like that."

Tori Sullivan, 13, said she just went through it at the Nez Perce County Fair when a friend sent her some threatening texts. "It's worse on a text message because you have time to think about it and you re-read it. When I came to school, I was mad at her. Today we talked about it. I don't want to make fun of people because I know how it feels."

Josh Daniel, Clarkston school resource officer, said cyber bullying is becoming a bigger problem, especially at high school and junior high. Online fights that begin at home spill into the school, even though the problems don't start there, he said.

"Typically, it's teenage girls. The cause is usually boyfriends or just flat out not liking each other. They get all of their friends involved and then when they see other at school, it blows up and they wind up in my office or the principal's office. It's time-consuming for me and the staff."

Cyber bullying has to be addressed so it doesn't escalate into something bigger, Daniel said. He's already dealt with six incidents since school started a month ago.

"They threaten each other, arrange fights, call each other names, post or text crude comments and photos. Rumors can spread so fast via the Internet."

More information on preventing cyber bullying is available online at www.unicel.com/standup.

FROM THE IDAHO-PRESS TRIBUNE, NAMPA

No new Education news stories posted online today.

FROM THE IDAHO STATESMAN

Boise State football players step in as personal shoppers at Operation School Bell

Shawn Raecke

Shyanne Augdon, 9, a third grader at Summer Wind Elementary School, tries on a pair of pants during the Assistance League's annual Operation School Bell on Wednesday morning. Members of the Boise State football team were on hand to help the children choose their clothes. Defensive Tackle Joe Bozиковich was Augdon's personal assistant for the day.

Assistance League of Boise

The Assistance League of Boise always needs donations to benefit Operation School Bell and six other local philanthropic programs.

Visit their thrift shop at 5825 Glenwood, Garden City. Call 377-4327 for more info.
BY ANNA WEBB - awebb@idahostatesman.com
Edition Date: 09/25/08

Comments (3) | Recommend (2)

No matter what's happening in the world, some things remain constant.

Growing kids need school clothes.

And the sight of a jersey-clad football player helping a little girl zip up a new sweatshirt will melt even the stoniest of hearts.

Operation School Bell, a philanthropic project of the Assistance League of Boise, provides new clothes - from underwear to winter coats and hats - for thousands of Ada County students each fall.

On Wednesday, two busloads of students got their clothes and an extra treat.

Each child had their own "personal shopper," a member of the Boise State football team, who helped them peruse shelves of bright, carefully folded sweatshirts, t-shirts and racks of jeans. The Broncos played board games with the kids and led sports activities in the parking lot.

Shyanne Augdon, 9, was more about autographs than clothes.

"I've gotten 17 autographs. Including Ian Johnson's. Twice," she said, waving the proof, scrawls of green ink with players' names and numbers. "When I show it to my mom, she'll probably hang it on the wall."

The Broncos have helped the project for three years. Director of football operations, Keith Bhonapha, said Operation School Bell is one of the more popular community outreach projects among team members.

"A lot of the players, they're not hermits, exactly, but they stick to themselves," Bhonapha said. "That all changes when they're around the kids."

The children who participate in Operation School Bell come from families that may have trouble buying new clothes and are referred by counselors and teachers.

Summerwind counselor Donna Hensley said that a number of parents call the school and ask if their children can be part of the project.

Joyce Davis, a project organizer, said that most of the money comes from sales at the Assistance League's thrift shop on Glenwood. The rest comes from grants and donations.

Last year, Operation School Bell provided clothes for 3,400 students in Ada County.

Senior linebacker Dallas Dobbs lost track of the number of autographs he signed Wednesday, but he got to enjoy an impromptu game of "War" with a student named Hannah.

She invited him to play, then sat him down and patiently explained the rules of the game.

FROM THE TWIN FALLS TIMES-NEWS

More students seeking help with college

By Ben Botkin

Times-News writer

Eighteen-year-old Leonel Lopez is working his way through college.

A freshman majoring in psychology and music at the College of Southern Idaho, Lopez makes ends meet financially with help from a variety of sources, including a federal Pell grant that helps with his tuition costs.

Through a federal work-study program, he also works 15 hours a week doing maintenance, cleaning and customer service at the Student Recreation Center. Lopez uses his paycheck for his apartment and food. He moved from Rupert to Twin Falls to start his studies at CSI.

"It's a really big help," Lopez said. "It's really good because it saves me from working another job."

With a souring economy, U.S. Department of Education officials are seeing a nationwide increase in the number of students seeking help defraying their college expenses. The federal agency is predicting that an additional \$5.9 billion will be needed next year to cover the costs of increased numbers of students seeking the federal Pell grants.

Across the United States, the number of applicants for the current school year - 13.1 million - has increased 8.13 percent compared to 2007, according to the department of education.

CSI officials have seen an increase in students seeking financial help in various forms. The assistance sought is not limited to Pell grants and extends into other areas like work-study programs and scholarships.

"The overall applications have increased," said Jennifer Zimmers, director of financial aid at CSI.

She estimated that there are roughly 300 to 400 more applicants compared to last year. In the 2007-2008 school year, the most recent period that figures available, \$5.3 million in Pell grants was given to CSI students.

Karrie Hornbacher, who assists students seeking federal work-study programs, said the majority of the college's 200-plus positions are filled. The program provides part-time jobs for students to earn money. Students work in areas like grounds and maintenance and the recreation center.

Students applying for the jobs sometimes mention economic factors - like the price of gas - that drive their need for work, Hornbacher said.

"She said, 'I just need something to help pay for gas,'" Hornbacher said, recalling what a student told her this week.

John Wood, a freshman in environmental science, doesn't have that problem. Wood, 28, rides his bike seven miles to CSI from his home in rural Twin Falls County near Filer. He also has a work-study job at CSI along with several other jobs that include working at a coffee shop, a farm and making custom bicycles.

Besides the extra money, work study jobs are a good way to get plugged into the college and meet people, Wood said.

Mary Jo Church, CSI's scholarship coordinator, said the college offers a variety of scholarships that are based on academics and merit, which provide another source of help for students beyond the scope of federal financial aid. She's already seen about 1,500 applicants for this school year, an increase of about 250 more students.

She said she believes that the economy plays a role in some of the students' applications.

"They know they need to up their skills for that better job," she said.

As for Lopez, he's also glad that his job keeps him on campus, cuts down on gas costs, and allows him enough time to study. While not getting the financial aid and campus job wouldn't have necessarily kept him out of college, the assistance certainly helped, Lopez said.

"It would have been a lot harder," he said. "I'd have to work a lot more."

Research center could be built on existing CAFO

By Nate Poppino
Times-News writer

University of Idaho officials are opening up their options for a new dairy research center, and will now consider possibly buying and retrofitting an existing facility as well as building their own, according to a Sept. 15 letter to dairy producers.

The decision regarding the Idaho Center for Livestock and Environmental Studies was spurred by "changing market and land values" in the Magic and Treasure valleys, wrote John Hammel,

dean of Idaho's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. The university would look at renovating an existing, modern facility that meets three criteria:

- More than 1,000 acres of cultivated land with good year-round water.
- Within 20 miles of both the College of Southern Idaho and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Research Service station in Kimberly.
- "Reasonably easy access" to Interstate 84.

The university is "very close" to starting a formal search for the site, Hammel wrote.

Rich Garber, U of I's director of industry and government relations, could not be reached Wednesday for comment on the letter.

University officials had talked about adapting an existing confined-animal feeding operation before, but then looked strictly at building their own facility, said Bob Naerebout, executive director of the Idaho Dairymen's Association. Hammel's letter, he said, seems to be a sign that the university is thoroughly examining its options to avoid a costly facility.

"I think it's a good plan," Naerebout said, adding that "taxpayers should be satisfied."

Garber said in June that work was continuing in the background to decide on a location for the \$37 million center, intended to operate both as a research complex and full-fledged CAFO. The complex would be managed by a nonprofit organization with its own board of directors. It would house 1,500 milking cows, 225 "dry" cows, 600 beef cattle and, eventually, 1,500 heifer replacements, according to preliminary plans presented to legislators.

The Legislature approved a \$10 million appropriation for the center, and the dairy industry, U of I and the Idaho State Department of Agriculture are collaborating to cover the rest of the costs. Former state veterinarian Dr. Greg Ledbetter is working to raise \$5 million from industry members for "bricks and mortar" costs, Naerebout said. Dairy and feedlot owners will later raise \$5 million to \$10 million more to fund an endowment for environmental research at the center, he said, a pledge made in February before the Legislature.

CSI prepares for possible budget-tightening

By Ben Botkin
Times-News writer

College of Southern Idaho officials have plans to cut back on remodeling projects, travel and equipment replacements if state revenue falters.

The plans were drafted on the heels of a Sept. 17 order by Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter for state agencies and department heads to look at their budgets and find cuts that will offset a nearly 6

percent anticipated shortfall in state revenue for this fiscal year. The governor asked for three new versions reflecting cuts, or holdbacks, of 1 percent, 2 percent and 2.5 percent.

"We won't do anything that's going to have an impact on students," said Mike Mason, vice president of administration.

For CSI, a 1 percent holdback, accounting for \$131,700, would lead to the following cuts: a telecommunications position budgeted at \$56,700 would remain unfilled, a loss of \$55,000 of planning incentive funds used to seed new projects, along with a cut of \$20,000 general fund capital money to replace computers and other administrative equipment.

A 2 percent holdback would require a cutback of \$263,400, of which \$151,700 would be taken from the general fund capital money. The other two cuts under the 1 percent scenario - the telecommunications position and the planning incentive funds - would still need to be trimmed from the budget.

A 2.5 percent holdback would affect \$329,200 of funding. That means the college would also have to cut its travel expenses by \$11,000, which is a 6.8 percent reduction of the general fund travel budget.

The budget for maintenance and remodeling projects would need to be cut by \$65,800, an 18.8 percent reduction.

The maintenance and remodeling cuts will not affect any major projects, Mason said, adding that potential projects such as office remodeling will be closely scrutinized before officials decide that they are needed.

For now, the college will wait for word from Boise before knowing the final impact on its budget.

"We can work our way through it," Mason said.

Twin Falls School District will evaluate technology needs

By Ben Botkin
Times-News writer

In the upcoming months, Twin Falls School District will be taking a look at its technology and what improvements are needed for the district to keep pace with a high-tech world.

The plan came out of the Twin Falls School Board meeting on Wednesday, when district officials talked about the board's goals and strategic plan. As part of the goal, the district's technology committee will be asked to evaluate what's needed with input from staff and students and come up with a plan by April that outlines specific steps to take.

"I would say that today's student is really dialed into technology," Superintendent Wiley Dobbs said.

Dobbs said the district's technology can certainly be improved on and expanded, adding that it's equally important to make sure staff members have all the necessary training for using technology.

"We would like to see more technology used," Dobbs said.

An example would be virtual technology that recreates dissections in a science lab, he said.

Mary Lu Barry, director of secondary programs, said technology has a wide array of ways to enhance learning, including three-dimensional demonstrations for students in science classes and other subjects.

Richard Crowley, a school board trustee, said that the present is a good time to look at technology across the district and plan ahead because the new high school is under construction this year.

FROM THE IDAHO STATE JOURNAL (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Simpson supports rural school funding Simpson

BY JOURNAL STAFF

U.S. Rep. Mike Simpson on Wednesday urged House negotiators on the tax extenders legislation to include a four-year reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act in any final bill.

The U.S. Senate on Tuesday approved a four-year extension of the "county payments" program, nearly doubling the funds it provides to Idaho's rural schools from \$24 million to \$42 million annually.

In Simpson's letter Wednesday, he stressed the importance of this funding to rural schools and communities.

"As you may know, the decline in timber harvesting in the Pacific Northwest over the past two decades has created an enormous hardship on rural schools that relied upon revenue sharing to fund education. These schools are located in areas where the federal government owns the vast majority of the land. Therefore, there is very little tax base upon which to draw from for even the most basic services like roads, search and rescue, and education," wrote Simpson.

Simpson continued, "It is important to understand that these funds are not handouts. Far from it, these funds are critical to the basic education of thousands of Idaho students. In fact, fully one-third of the budget for some Idaho schools comes from this program."

Simpson's letter was addressed to House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Charles Rangel (D-NY) and Ranking Member Jim McCrery (R-LA).

A complete copy of Simpson's letter is available upon request.

FROM THE IDAHO FALLS POST REGISTER (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

No new education news stories posted online today.